

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 03718 01 OF 02 041912Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CU-02 BIB-01 DHA-02 ACDA-07
EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ERDA-05 ERDE-00 /083 W
-----041935Z 026677 /46

O R 041804Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1260
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 03718

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 03718 01 OF 02 041912Z

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UK, SHUM. CSCE
SUBJECT: OWEN SPEECH ON DETENTE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SUMMARY. IN HIS FIRST MAJOR SPEECH AS FOREIGN SECRETARY,
DR. DAVID OWEN DELIVERED A POWERFUL STATEMENT ON
BRITAIN'S COMMITMENT BOTH TO SUPPORT DETENTE AND TO TAKE

AN INTERNATIONAL STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS. OWEN POINTED OUT THAT THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT WAS BASICALLY A STATEMENT OF ASPIRATIONS, NOT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND SAID THAT BRITAIN WOULD SPEAK OUT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN BOTH THE COMMUNIST AND NON-COMMUNIST WORLDS. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT HMG WOULD HAVE TO BALANCE MORALITY WITH REALITY, AND THERE WERE THEREFORE SITUATIONS IN WHICH PRIVATE PRESSURE MIGHT BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN PUBLIC DECLARATIONS. OWEN SALUTED PRESIDENT CARTER'S SUPPORT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SAID HE WAS VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY IN WASHINGTON NEXT WZHK. END SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS FIRST MAJOR SPEECH SINCE BECOMING FOREIGN SECRETARY, DR. DAVID OWEN USED A MARCH 3 DINNER OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND COMMONWEALTH WRITERS' ASSOCIATION AS THE OCCASION TO DELIVER A HARD-HITTING STATEMENT ON THE BRITISH COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. OWEN OPENED HIS REMARKS BY OBSERVING THAT DESPITE A QUANTITATIVE INCREASE IN THE WORLD'S NUCLEAR STOCKPILE, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE PROCESS OF DETENTE DURING THE PAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS HAD LED TO A "QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT IN THE WAY IN WHICH EAST AND WEST SEEK TO MANAGE THE MUTUAL THREAT PRESENTED BY EACH OTHER'S NUCLEAR ARSENALS....THE CENTRAL ACHIEVEMENT HAS BEEN THE WILLINGNESS OF THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION TO ENGAGE IN TALKS ON STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION."

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 03718 01 OF 02 041912Z

3. EMPHASIZING THAT BRITAIN'S COMMITMENT TO DETENTE WAS AS FIRM TODAY AS IT WAS ON THE EVE OF THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE IN 1975, OWEN ADMITTED THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DISILLUSIONMENT IN THE WEST OVER THE FRUITS OF CSCE BUT POINTED OUT THAT THE FINAL ACT WAS "NOT A TREATY WHICH HAS GIVEN THE SANCTION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW TO THE STATUS QUO IN EUROPE. IT IS, ON THE CONTRARY, A DECLARATION OF PURPOSE WHICH LOOKS TO THE FUTURE, NOT TO THE PAST ITS VALUE IS FUNDAMENTALLY LONG-TERM IT REFLECTS DETENTE'S HIGHEST ASPIRATIONS."

4. OWEN SAID THAT IT WAS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THAT THE FINAL ACT WOULD BRING THE MILLENNIUM OVERNIGHT, BUT HE NOTED THAT IT WAS ALREADY SERVING AS A BEACON AND REFERENCE POINT FOR THOSE SEEKING BETTERMENT OF THEIR SOCIETIES: "WE NOTE FOR INSTANCE THAT THE SIGNATORIES OF CHARTER 77 IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA PROFESS NO WISH TO OVERTHROW THE REGIME; CONCERN THEMSELVES STRICTLY WITH

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS; AND ALL QUOTE
THE FINAL ACT."

5. OWEN REJECTED THE "INTERNAL INTERFERENCE" ARGUMENT
BY POINTING OUT, "IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF INTERFERING
IN OTHER PEOPLE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE UNITED NATIONS
CHARTER, THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, THE
UN COVENANT ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THE FINAL ACT ITSELF
DEMONSTRATE BEYOND ANY SHADOW OF DOUBT THAT ABUSES OF
HUMAN RIGHTS, WHEREVER THEY MAY OCCUR, ARE THE
LEGITIMATE SUBJECT OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN." OWEN WENT

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 LONDON 03718 02 OF 02 041915Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 03718

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 03718 02 OF 02 041915Z

ON TO SAY THAT IT WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE WHO CONDUCT FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO RECOGNIZE THE WEIGHT OF PUBLIC OPINION AND CONCERN AND EMPHASIZED. "IN BRITAIN WE WILL TAKE OUR STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE. WE WILL NOT DISCRIMINATE. WE WILL APPLY THE SAME STANDARDS AND JUDGEMENTS TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AS WE DO TO CHILE, UGANDA, AND SOUTH AFRICA. PRESIDENT CARTER, WHOSE OBVIOUS CONCERN FOR THE WHOLE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT, HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THIS WILL ALSO BE THE ATTITUDE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. I AM LOOKING FORWARD VERY MUCH TO SEEING HIM AND MR. VANCE IN WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK."

6. SIGNIFICANTLY, HOWEVER, OWEN NOTED THAT "THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS ONLY ONE STRAND IN THE COMPLEX OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS WE HAVE TO BALANCE MORALITY WITH REALITY." THUS, SAID OWEN, WHILE PUBLIC CONCERN WOULD BE GIVEN ITS DUE, "GOVERNMENTS HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE COMPLEXITY OF INTER-STATE RELATIONS AND THE DIFFERENT LEVELS ON WHICH THESE OPERATE." OWEN EXPANDED ON THIS THESIS BY SAYING THAT HMG WOULD HAVE TO DECIDE WHEN SPEAKING OUT WOULD BE EFFECTIVE AND WHEN IT WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE: "IN ORACTICE THIS MEANS THAT SOMETIMES PRIVATE PRESSURE MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE; AT OTHER TIMES A STRONG PUBLIC STAND MAY BE NECESSARY."

7. IN WHAT CAN ONLY BE SEEN AS A POINTED REFERENCE TO THE SAKHAROV AND BUKOVSKIY CASES, OWEN SAID, "AT TIMES THE PUBLIC DECLARATIONS OF GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE AS EXHILARATING AS, FOR INSTANCE, SOME OF THE HIGHLY ARTICULATE STATEMENTS OF FAMOUS EXILES FROM EASTERN EUROPE OR ELSEWHERE." WHILE SALUTING THE COURAGE OF THESE EXILES AND DISSIDENTS, OWEN OBSERVED, "GOVERN-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 03718 02 OF 02 041915Z

MENTS MAY HAVE A LESS DECLARATORY MESSAGE. FOR A GOVERNMENT'S FIRST TASK IS TO HELP PROVIDE AND SUSTAIN THE FRAMEWORK OF PEACE AND SECURITY WITHIN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS CAN BE DISCUSSED, CHAMPIONED, AND ENLARGED."

8. OWEN'S ADDRESS HAS BEEN SALUTED IN THE LONDON DAILY PRESS OF MARCH 4, WITH MOST PAPERS MAKING THE OBVIOUS COMPARISONS BETWEEN HIS APPROACH AND THAT OF PRESIDENT CARTER. "THE GUARDIAN'S" PETER JENKINS

POINTED OUT THE NUANCED DIFFERENCES IMPLICIT IN OWEN'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT HMG WOULD HAVE TO TEMPER DECLARATIONS OF MORALITY WITH CONSIDERATIONS OF PRACTICALITY.

9. FCO HAS CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS THAT THIS SPEECH, ORIGINALLY COMMISSIONED BY THE LATE FOREIGN SECRETARY ANTHONY CROSLAND, WENT THROUGH INNUMERABLE DRAFTS BEFORE REACHING OWEN, WHO ADDED HIS OWN FINAL TOUCHES TO IT. THE SPEECH WAS NOT COORDINATED OR OTHERWISE DISCUSSED WITH BRITAIN'S EC PARTNERS BEFORE DELIVERY AND THUS REPRESENTS A UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF HMG FOREIGN POLICY. IT WILL SERVE, AS IT WAS DOUBTLESS INTENDED TO DO, AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR DISCUSSION IN BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FORA OF BRITISH INTENTIONS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD.

10. EMBASSY IS POUCHING FULL TEXT OF OWEN'S SPEECH TO THE DEPARTMENT BY AIRGRAM. FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO REVIEW THIS TEXT PRIOR TO NEXT WEEK'S CALLAGHAN/OWEN VISIT, HOWEVER, FCO CONFIRMS THAT FULL TEXT HAS BEEN CABLED TO HM EMBASSY WASHINGTON, WHICH CAN SUPPLY COPIES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Litigation History:
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3209046
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OWEN SPEECH ON DETENTE AND HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMARY. IN HIS FIRST MAJOR SPEECH AS FOREIGN SECRETARY, DR. DAVID OWEN DELIVERED A POWERFUL STATEMENT ON
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, UK, CSCE, (OWEN, DAVID)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/28c1adbd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009